

# Live!

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] I would like us to turn back to 1 Peter 1 and verses 1 to 12 as we begin our study in the morning services. This epistle, this letter that was written to several churches, read and passed round to several churches by the apostle Peter, led and guided by the Holy Spirit. Foundations are very important in life and this letter is all about making sure that our foundations in life are right. They are really significant. I hope with an outstanding illustration earlier on you got the point of that with the children that you could see the difference between something that was well grounded and had a good solid foundation and something that was just kind of built on sand. It doesn't last. And it's important here in St. Columbus. This is a big church. It's an old church. It's been standing a long time and we're glad that it's not standing on Portobello beach, but it's on Castle Rock. It's a good solid rock. These pillars, these cast iron pillars go down through into the hall and then down through the shops and then down into Victoria Street to Castle

Rock. It's a good solid foundation, this church. The strong foundations are important, very important in life. And Peter wants to remind us struggling difficult, these churches that are going through struggling difficult times, the foundations in life, what they understand of the truth of Jesus Christ is what really is going to stand them in good stead when trouble comes in their lives because they were at church under persecution struggling.

If we have today a false idea of who Jesus is, of what He's going to give us, of what life's going to be like, then when trouble comes we'll probably abandon Him. I didn't think this is what it was going to be like because we don't know the truth of who the person of who Jesus is and our faith collapses when we're trusting on someone who's not real. You know what said that in the prayer, isn't it? It matters the kind of Jesus we believe in. It's not a Jesus that we mould and fashion in our own image. It's not one we'd say, I like page 52, I like that picture of Jesus, I like a little bit in page 78.

We mould Him in our own image, but we leave out all other truth about Jesus that we maybe struggle with or that we haven't had time to look at or consider in our lives. The gospel of Jesus and the person of Jesus and the relationship with Jesus is the only foundation, is the only lasting foundation that we can have as human beings, human beings. What is your life founded on when the storms of life come and when death comes? What is your life found? Who is the foundation of your life? Because this epistle is all about hope and it's all about life in Jesus Christ. Peter introduces himself, I call good letter writers, Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ and that's significant, it's not just a nomenclature that he gives, he's giving, sorry I said I wasn't going to use any big names for the names, I don't even know what it means so we'll forget about that, but it's just a name and a title that he uses because it's important and significant isn't it? Eric Lamont, minister of St Columbus Street Church you might say that or you might have a different title that you would give to your name, but here Peter is saying an apostle of Jesus Christ but it's not just by way of introduction, it's because it's important, he's an apostle and he's bringing a word of authority with the apostolic authority that he possesses in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 20, I hope it will come up on the screen, we have these words, consequently you are no longer foreigners and aliens but fellow citizens with God's people, members of God's household built and here we're talking about foundations again, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the head chief cornerstone, so throughout the gospels we have this truth and we have these truths and these foundations that are very important and Peter is wanting the Christians in these churches to know about foundations and what's important, Christ Jesus and the word of the apostles and the prophets and we know also in 1 Peter here in the section we read that he speaks about the prophets in verses 10 to 12, how they were looking forward to this, I'm not going to spend time on that section but we know that right from the Old Testament these prophets were looking

forward to, were prophesying, were wondering about who exactly the saviour the redeemer would be and they were filled with the Holy Spirit as they did and that message and the message of the apostles is the foundation on which we build our lives, there's an authority that Peter has, it's an authority that's spoken of in other places in the New Testament where they declare the faith or they declare the tradition or they declare the truth or they declare the foundation of the gospel, the apostolic creed, the essentials of the faith over which there is no question and no debate and no doubt, people might disagree, people might not believe but there is no doubt over what are the essential truths of the gospel that he is wanting to share and the essential truths of the person of Jesus.

So our choice today in our lives is who is at the centre, if I can change the image from foundation to centre, I don't know if there's much difference, who's at the centre of your life, who's at the core of your life, who's at the foundation of your life, is it Jesus Christ or is it ourselves, are we at the centre or is Christ at the centre of our lives?

[ 6 : 26 ] In other words, in your day to day living as a Christian, do you see Christ's job to change, to fit into your thinking and your model of living or do you see it as your job to change, to be modeled to Christ, to be like Christ and to be founded in Christ?

It's an unchanging foundation, you see, and it's because he's a real person. See if Christ isn't real to us, if we can look at the Bible and say, well I'm not sure about this, I'm not sure about that, I'm not sure if that's the real Christ, I'm not sure if the Christ of the New Testament, I'm not sure about how he really lived or what he was really like, we can't really know, it was a long time ago.

If we have that kind of insecurity in our thinking, if we don't recognise that the Bible is given as a revelation of a person of Jesus Christ, then we'll find it easy to chop and change the character of Christ because he's not real to us, he's not a real relationship and it's not a real person.

More we get to know somebody, the more we recognise who they are and we don't misunderstand them and the same is true with Jesus Christ.

In the early persecuted church here, they had to ask and they needed to know who this Jesus was, is he worth trusting through the suffering and persecution they were facing?

[ 7 : 54 ] Is it worth seeing my best friend martyred? Is Jesus worth holding on to? Or should we just give up and do something else? Is the foundation significant for us?

And that's true for us in our lives also, is Jesus Christ important enough to mould and to change our lives around.

So these are our foundation, he's the centre of our lives. So there's a couple of things I want to speak about here in this chapter and then a couple of realities as well.

Two foundational gifts that we receive as Christians that found our lives, that gripped our lives, are the basis of our lives in Jesus Christ and you'll find in the bulletin sheet there's some light notes for this morning's sermon as well if that helps you to concentrate.

Two foundational gifts, grace and peace. He begins with explaining to whom he is writing, to God's elect in these places and then he says grace and peace be yours in abundance.

[ 9 : 07 ] These are two really important foundational gifts that we are given as Christians. Grace is a spiritual reality for us.

As Christians we live in grace, okay, that we are loved as we've spent the last six months looking at in Sunday morning services.

We are loved through Jesus Christ and by His work by an eternal, infinite, triune God.

He loves us, this great God. You look greater love as no man unless you give up his life for his friends. This is the Christ who loves us and that's the great foundation of our lives.

It's a state we have entered into, it's a state of life and it's a state of love. You see sin has been removed from our lives in terms of God's relationship to us.

[ 10 : 12 ] That barrier between ourselves and God has been taken away, the judgment God and in our relationship with God we are in a state of grace, we're adopted, we belong, we're blessed.

Our names are engraved in His hands, He's committed to us. I think of someone really important to you today, someone really big and famous maybe, someone that you really look up to and then imagine them coming to your home and saying, well, we'll just say they're really rich as well for the sake of it, coming to your home and saying, I really want to be a friend with you, things are going to be all right.

If you get any debts I can pay them off, you can come to my house and we can share friendship with my family and when I'm on the news or when I'm on television you can sit beside me and everyone will know that you're significant and part of my life and you know how it would, you would kind of if someone's significant important that you really looked up to you think, well that's great, I feel quite important and you would feel a relative degree of safety and security in that relationship but how much more with the living God that we are in this relationship of love with Him even if we don't feel it.

Can I say that today? Even if you don't feel, you don't feel the love. In Christ we're in this relationship of grace with God.

That's a state that we've entered into, a state that is the foundation of our lives. Not only is it a state but it should be for us increasingly the fragrance of our lives as we live with that foundation that we rise every morning as Christians saying whatever happens today I am loved by God, they'll say a little bit more about that in a minute.

[12:15] For that grace that is the foundation of my life is the fragrance of my life. In other words it's significant for us to make our identity as believers in Christ and in grace.

That's what matters most, that we are Christians and that we are loved. Therefore we love and we forgive and we serve and we seek the good of others and we rejoice in Jesus Christ.

However difficult that is, that's the fragrance of our lives. It's the fragrance in our homes, it's the fragrance of our marriages, it's the fragrance of our sibling relationships, of our child to parent, parent to child relationships, of our work colleagues.

We respond and we look and we live with the eyes of grace because this is the great foundation of our lives, grace but also peace. These are these great foundational gifts that we've been given, grace and peace, peace in our life.

That is spiritual peace, okay? It's declared over us when we have come to faith and trust in Jesus Christ again, whether we sense that or not is at one point, at one level completely irrelevant because it's a declaration that until our sins are dealt with there's an enmity between ourselves and God.

[13:50] We're enemies, we're not facing Him, we're not in relationship with Him but through Jesus Christ peace has been declared and we're at peace with God.

Did you read this, I think it was this week or last week about the Japanese soldier? He died last week, Japanese soldier. For 28 years he lived in Guam after the Second World War in the jungles there, thinking the war was still on.

He didn't realize that peace had broken out 28 years before. So he lived his life in terror of being attacked and imprisoned or taken hostage and killed or whatever.

He had no contact really with the outside world but anyone he did see he was terrified and petrified of because he thought the world was still at war.

The declaration of peace, the reality of peace made no difference in his life and sometimes we live like that as well, don't we?

[14:50] We live as if we're still at war with God, we live as if there is no peace and we find ourselves living at enmity towards Him because we don't recognize what has happened.

But it's a peace that is beyond understanding. Philippians 4 verse 7 reminds us of that, doesn't it? Don't be anxious about anything, very well known words, but in everything by praying in petition with thanksgiving, present your request to God.

And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ. It's beyond natural so that there is a point in people's lives where they can know and appreciate and understand peace with God even when everything outwardly doesn't look like there's peace.

It's the storms of life picture, it's the foundation picture, it's the reality picture that in our lives the foundation is grace and peace for us.

That is a great and a solid and important foundation. There's no limit, it's in there in abundance, there's no limit to that experience for us as we apply our lives towards Christ.

[16:07] It's our resistance and our independence that loses sight, causes us to lose sight of His grace and of His peace in our lives.

So these are very important things. They're massive things. They are life changing realities. They change us absolutely and completely, their foundation, whatever happens in our lives.

Whatever experiences we go through, grace and peace are our gifts. Through Jesus Christ as believers, people who were persecuted needed to know that and I believe we need to know that. As it results in therefore, I hope for us, to or the realities are, there's living foundational realities as well.

There's these great gifts of grace and peace and the realities that stem out of them, I hope this makes sense, are significant, tremendously significant as well and the two realities are rejoicing and refining.

[ 17 : 18 ] I want to spend a bit of time on these ones. Rejoicing and refining. We are not yet in heaven, okay?

Much to rejoice in, but we are not yet in heaven and this is very important here. It's important, remember this is to a persecuted church, persecuted believers, people who are struggling, people who are opposed, people who don't know, bang, what's hit them?

Something bad is happening and they're asking, well, where's God in this? Where's Christ? What's it about? I thought I had grace and peace and abundance, it doesn't seem like that.

So what's the reality then of our lives today as Christians? Well remember that this was written, I go to the very end of this.

It was written for our encouragement. Peter writes this briefly for encouragement and testifying that this is the true grace of God to stand fast in it.

[ 18 : 22 ] So the reason Peter's writing this and the reason God has given us this is that you today and me today will stand firm, okay?

That will stand fast, founded on the rock, that will root our lives, our Christian lives in Jesus Christ as is, Jesus Christ is revealed, okay?

That's what he wants us to do, stand firm and be encouraged to stand firm. And so there's kind of two elements in that standing firm that we find almost contradict one another at one level as we think about it.

The first is rejoicing, okay? So he gives grace and peace and then he goes on to say praise be to God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ in His great mercy, He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Rejoicing, that's a great foundational reality of the Christian who's living in the light of these gifts of grace and of peace.

[ 19 : 28 ] Rejoicing, you know, I'm embarrassed to talk about rejoicing in church because everyone's so miserable about being a Christian. I'm embarrassed about it because people are going through such miserable experiences when we talk about rejoicing in church.

He thinks the minister's no idea what he's talking about. He's living in a wee tower of Babel up there. He's living in his own life. He's living in a monastery.

He has no idea what real life's about. What does he know about suffering? He tells us all to come and rejoice. Who's he kidding? We all want to celebrate.

Everyone wants a good party, but we're embarrassed to celebrate our faith and we're embarrassed to rejoice in Christ.

Somewhere along the line, I'm an old punk rocker and there is a song by Ian Durie in the blockheads called Reasons to be Cheerful, part three.

[ 20 : 26 ] But let's remember reasons to be cheerful. Part one, as Christians, we have reasons to be cheerful as Christians. This isn't pie in the sky.

This isn't theorizing. It's about how real Jesus Christ is to you. Because if Jesus Christ is real and He's gifted you grace and peace, then you have great reason today, whatever experiences you've brought in with you to church, to rejoice in Him because of His great mercy.

He goes on to explain that we have a living hope. Do you know how great that is? To have a living hope? We're not dead. We're living spiritually in relationship with God through when we get old and foosty and die and corrode and corrupt in our bodies, our souls live on.

Even though we die yet, shall we live? Have you thought about that? I'm 48, I think about it more now than I used to. Maybe the young people here don't.

There's maybe some people who are double my age here. Do you think about that? Should you get an older? Do you have to retire from football? It's a dodgy knees.

[ 21 : 39 ] You can't do what you once used to do. You think about the living hope that you have in Jesus Christ that is being renewed day by day. It's a wonderful thing.

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, we have a living hope. The resurrection power of Christ is in us. I know someone who's related to someone in this congregation who's not a believer who struggles with believing because they can't believe in the resurrection. I think that's a really good thing to struggle with. Because if you believe in the resurrection, then everything else stems from that. It's a genuine wrestling with that fact. But once we've snapped that, once we recognize that Jesus Christ is God who's raised from the dead and defeated its power, and that that power is gifted to us in Christ, then there's great reasons to be cheerful.

That is ours. Whatever happens today. And we have an inheritance, solid gold inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, being kept in heaven until its power is ready to be revealed.

[ 22 : 47 ] That's great, isn't it? In Christ we possess this something that can't be stolen, something that can't be lost. Oh boy, that's great for me.

I lose everything. I'm even losing my memory. Everything's going. But in Christ this is something that can't be lost. It's secure.

And that's foundational truth of life. So that this reality should be for us a reality of our lives.

Yes, we've got this grace, these gifts, grace and peace. And as a response to that, the foundational characteristic or dynamic of our lives is one of praise.

One of praise. One of celebration. One of joy. It's hard for doer Calvinistic Presbyterians to grasp.

[ 23 : 47 ] Of course we're miserable wretched sinners. But don't let Satan wallow you in that because we've been redeemed from the curse of that in our lives.

It doesn't mean that we underestimate the power, far from it, underestimate the power of sin. Far from it. Because it's Christ that sets us free.

And it's in Christ that we rejoice. So can I ask today, as I apply this truth to myself and yourself, do you express this attitude of praise as a reality of your life, as a foundational reality of your life?

Is it one of praise? People looking forward to the weekend to celebrate in some way. But we should be praising every moment of every day with a sense of joy because that's our testimony.

And don't tell me, please don't tell me that I'm naive. Don't tell me you have no idea what I'm going through. I may well not have any idea what you're going through.

[ 24 : 53 ] But please don't tell me I'm naive. Because this is foundational truth on which to build our lives.

It's not unrealistic. It's recognizing, is Jesus real? Or is He just make-believe? Is He just a ritualistic person that we've somehow come to understand or live to think about?

Or is He real? You know, has He gifted us grace and peace? Has what He did on the cross achieved something for us? Have we moved from darkness to light, from death to life?

Or is it just all kind of theology to us? Is it just theoretical? And can it be moved and adapted and changed? And can we question it so that these truths, this deposit that is given to us is a deposit that, well, we don't know if it's true or not.

Because if that's the case, you will not stand when the storms of life come. You will not stand.

Because it must be based on the person and the reality and the relationship that you have with Jesus Christ.

[ 26 : 05 ] So praise is a foundational reality of our lives. That is how we live our lives. Not in cynicism, not in unbelief, in praise, in living, adoring praise, humble praise, falling on our knees in praise and worship to the living God.

So it's rejoicing just to keep up the alliteration. It's also refining. And that's what I like about Scripture. It's so realistic.

Because there is praise and there is rejoicing, but there is also refining and we must recognise that in our lives. In this, and it's kind of, it's weighed up in verse 6 together.

And this you greatly rejoice, that is in the inheritance, the hope. Though now for a little time you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

So your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus comes. So the last thing I'm going to say with this will finish is rejoicing is a foundational reality of our Christian lives.

[ 27 : 20 ] But so is refining. We are being refined. And we need to recognise that or when it happens, when we suffer all kinds of trials, we'll be shocked.

What's Jesus doing? Why is He doing this? He loves me, He's my Daddy. Why am I struggling so much? Why isn't it all a pavement of gold to heaven?

Why can't I skip there on the atmosphere of grace and love? Because the reality is there's a refining process going on in our lives also.

And we mustn't be shocked when that happens otherwise. Again the foundation will go because it's not founded on the Christ that is revealed.

In verse 11, we told about the prophets who were trying to find the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that was followed.

[ 28 : 20 ] Now that's the model that we follow in our lives as disciples of Christ, suffering and glory. The difference is we don't do it on our own, we don't suffer on our own.

Christ has been there for us and He takes us through us. The reality is that there's a refining process going on because we're not in heaven yet, that old image as well from sermon earlier on the beginning of the year.

We're not in heaven yet. We're still. Sin is defeated but it's not destroyed. We still live in the atmosphere so we've still got the old nature in ourselves and therefore we recognise there's a refining process going on.

The danger is today in our, how do you call it, our kind of soft consumerist society that we want everything easy.

The danger is we just don't want to know a Christ like this. We don't, not only do we not like Him, we just don't want to know. Because really deep down I'm a good guy.

[ 29 : 32 ] I'm a good guy, Jesus loves me and He shouldn't allow these things in my life. We run away, we question it. When struggles come, what is the foundation of our lives?

This absolute reality of refining that's happening. And why is it so important? It's so important because it's a mark of authenticity.

It reminds us it's not about our faith, it's not about, oh I need to really keep going to show I'm genuine. That's the time, I know I'm nearly finished.

It's not a mark of authenticity about our faith. It's a mark of authenticity of the gift of faith we've been given. That this is the real Christ and I've got the real thing.

It's precious. When you love someone, whether it's in a friendship or a marriage or whatever it is, that relationship will in this life always be tested, wouldn't it? It'll always be tested.

[ 30 : 34 ] Friendships, marriages, they're tested. Go through difficult times, hard times. And it's through these times that you mature in your relationship and you learn how genuine the love is you have for one another, or maybe not.

But it's a maturing process. It says, yeah, we've got a real deep love here because we've come through the difficult times together and we've matured through it. And in Christ, the testing, the trials that we go through are Christ's way of reminding us that what we have is His.

It will come through the fire even more mature and refined and better. And the sins and the dross and the impurities and the misunderstandings that we have are burned away as we go through these things.

No, I know, I know, I know. No one likes this. No one likes the whole concept of refining. We just don't like that concept.

But we recognize that this is to give our Christian lives a stamp of authenticity that, yes, this is the gift of grace I've been given and the gift of faith I've been given.

[ 31 : 53 ] And it's come through remarkably, it's come through fires and opposition and difficulties to the praise and glory and honor of God.

It's a mark of authenticity. It's a reminder of how precious what we have is, and it's a reminder that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

That's hugely significant. 2 Timothy 1.12. Remember that? I'm not ashamed. I'm suffering the way I am, says Paul, yet I'm not ashamed because I know whom I have, I know whom I have believed. Yes, no, I just think about this as a kind of, I know whom I have believed. I'm convinced that He's able to guard what I've entrusted to Him to that day. So the conviction comes from Him gifting faith which takes us through the sufferings that we're going through.

As we cling on to Him, it's looking to Him, isn't it? And relying on Him. And Romans 8.38 as well. It's great cry.

[ 32 : 56 ] And you know, these guys were not living in ivory towers. They're not living in a dream world. They're not giving us theological theory.

This is, he was left for dead. As you remember, we looked at it last week and actually was left for dead. Stoned left for dead. The great apostle but left for dead.

I'm convinced that neither death nor life, angels or demons, present or future, powers neither heightened or dead, nor anything in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of Christ. That is in Christ Jesus, love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. That is the mark of authenticity of someone who's come through the dark times stronger because they have taken these dark times and they've clung on to Jesus Christ through them.

When your struggles and difficulties come, what are you going to do with them? Where's your foundation when the storms come? Is it in this knowledge and relationship with the Jesus who says these will come?

[ 34 : 02 ] You're not greater than me. He says I've suffered, you will suffer but I will be with you through that and I will take you through and one day you will soar.

One day you will run and not be weary. One day you will walk and not faint. One day you will overcome. I'm telling you today even the angels long to look into these things.

I mean let's bow our heads in prayer. Father God we ask that you would help us to understand what we experience.

You don't want us to be left struggling and in doubt. You want us to be honest of that, there's no doubt.

You want us also to be open to that relationship which tells us of the immense privileges that we possess in Christ, grace and peace and of that fundamental movement from darkness to light, from death to life and also that in our life there will be rejoicing and refining.

[ 35 : 24 ] Love has depth in our Christianity to understand that and I pray particularly for any who might be here today for whom the struggles of the Christian life feel like overwhelming them and they're wondering about God's love and about the fatherhood of God and the grace of Jesus and where it is.

May they not sink, may they hold on to you, may they hear these words of encouragement that you will use even what the evil one intends to break us and destroy us and submerge us.

God will use that because he's defeated the evil one. He will use it to refine us and to purify our faith, to strengthen us and to remind us that our names are engraved on his hands and he will not let us go.

May it also remind us of the reality sometimes of false faith, faith in an idol, faith in a Jesus that we've made up, a Jesus that's just like a big Santa Claus who will give us everything we want and who will not be honest with the rebellion and sometimes the unbelief that looms large in our hearts. May our God teach us to submit to you in all your glory today for we ask it in his precious name. Amen.